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A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
LORDS Spiritual and Temporal
IN THE

ABBY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,
ON
FRIDAY MARCH 14. 1760.

Being the DAY appointed by his
MAJESTY'S PROCLAMATION
FOR A
General FAST and HUMILIATION.

By ZACHARY, *Prance*
Lord BISHOP of ROCHESTER. *K*

L O N D O N:
Printed for B. DOD, in *Ave-Mary-Lane*.
M.DCC.LX.

SE R M O N

LORDS Spiritual and Temporal

Die Luna, 17^o Martii, 1760.

ORDERED by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of ROCHESTER for the Sermon by him preached before this House in the Abby-Church *Westminster* on *Friday* last; and he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

ASHLEY COWPER, Cler. Parliamentor.

Lord Bishop of ROCHESTER.

L O N D O N :

Printed for B. Dod, in New-Street-Lane.

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On FRIDAY MARCH 14. 1760.

PSALM XX. 7.

*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will
remember the name of the Lord our God.*

THIS Psalm is one of those which had David for its royal author, and it is commonly supposed to have been written by that Jewish monarch upon the following occasion.

THE Ammonites were a flourishing and powerful nation, whose borders lay near to those of David; and

B

whether

whether in the pride of their greatness, or from the motive of state-jealousy, or for other reasons of which the sacred historians are silent, they had not only in an unfriendly manner interrupted that intercourse which had long subsisted between them and the Israelites, but they had given too strong a proof of their hearty ill-will to the Israelites by assaulting and opprobriously treating some of David's subjects.

DAVID, a prince bound in duty, and carried by inclination, to promote the well-fare as well as to procure the safety of his people, thought himself obliged not to let such injuries pass unheeded and unrepaired.

THEY were of such a nature, as to leave no room for expostulations : and therefore David was soon determined to do justice to his subjects with all that power which God had put into his hands ; and which he prepared with so much diligence and speed, that the Ammonites (as we are told) plainly perceived, that they had * “ made themselves odious unto David.”

BUT human nature (alas !) is such, that commonly the same wrong temper, which sets men upon *doing ill*, disposes them to take every method rather than that of *undoing* it. Sooner than acknowledge one fault, they will choose to commit a train of them, that they may avoid the unwelcome work of making reparation.

THUS

* 1 Chron. xix. 6.

THUS it was with the Ammonites : for, by the scriptural account of this matter, we may learn, that from the very first they had resolved against all pacifick measures with David ; and that, when they saw him determined to exert himself in the defence of his injured subjects, they had strengthened themselves with new alliances, and had called in to their aid ^b several foreign states, who by their auxiliary troops might so far join with theirs, as to make an useful diversion in their favour.

As the Ammonites were a rich people, abounding with silver, they furnished those allies with large sums of money (the sacred history says ^c, “ with a thousand talents of silver”), and these in return supplied them with the best military forces of their dominions. With this foreign assistance, acting in support of the same cause which their own troops did, the Ammonites had promised to themselves that success in a war with David, which otherwise they could not reasonably have hoped for.

HERE then was an affair, which well deserved David's most serious attention : and in that season of trouble and danger he is thought to have composed this psalm, which appears to have one especial circumstance attending it, not to be found (at least not so plainly found) in any other of the many psalms, of which he was the author.

B 2

IT

^b 2 Sam. x. 6.^c 1 Chron. xix. 6.

It seems not only to have been drawn up for general use upon some day appointed for publick worship ; but to have been sung in parts alternately by David and his subjects, when thus assembled together. The five first verses of it appear plainly to have been designed for the voice of the people : “ The Lord hear thee,
 “ (said they) in the day of trouble : the name of the
 “ God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from
 “ the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.
 “ Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-
 “ sacrifices. Grant thee according to thine own
 “ heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. We will rejoice in
 “ thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will
 “ set up our banners. The Lord fulfil all thy peti-
 “ tions.” Thus far the Jewish people seem to have sung and prayed for a divine blessing upon their sovereign : and David, then strongly encouraged by the earnest and unanimous prayers of his subjects, took upon himself the next verse of this anthem, and sang in the presence of them all what we read in v. 6.
 “ Now know I, that the Lord saveth (or, *will save*)
 “ his anointed : he will hear him from his holy hea-
 “ ven, with the wholesome strength of his right
 “ hand.”

WHEN this short, but full, part of David was finished, the people seem to have gone on again with their pious song, saying, as in my text, “ Some trust
 “ in chariots and some in horses : but we will re-
 “ member

“remember the name of the Lord our God ;” and so closing their devotions with the remainder of this psalm.

I MENTION this chiefly, that you may observe what it was, which seems to have given to David the fairest prospect of success under his trying circumstances, namely, the unanimous applications of his subjects, in their devotions to heaven, for the divine help and assistance.

THIS was the best support, which could be fetched in for him in the time of trouble : and it is at all times the wisest and surest method which any prince can propose, whose lot it is to be engaged in the unwelcome (but sometimes necessary) state of war.

THAT we may see this the more clearly, let us from the words of my text consider, as (no doubt) the Jewish people then did,

I. How vain it is for men to “trust in chariots and horses ;” or (in other words) how vain it is for men engaged in war to place an entire trust and confidence in the best human help of any kind.

II. WHAT methods a nation under these circumstances should take for procuring to its self the blessing of a divine assistance, implied in the expression, “we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”

I BEGIN

I. I BEGIN with the first of these two considerations, and shall endeavour to shew you, how vain it is for men to “trust in chariots and horses;” or (in other words) for men engaged in war to place an entire trust and confidence in the best human help of any kind.

THE nations, hired in David’s days as auxiliaries to the Ammonites, had prepared a great number of chariots and horses; that is, chariots drawn by horses, which in those days was the chief, if not the only, use of horses in battle, as may be gathered from the sacred accounts of antiquity. These they brought along with their other troops into the field; and with these such dreadful execution was commonly done in battle, that men, who look no further than to natural causes only, might easily be induced to *trust in* them, and to promise themselves victory from the superiority of this force, and the extreme difficulty of withstanding such a weight of opposition. Especially, if those chariots were armed with sharp scythes on each side of them (as the practice oftentimes was in those eastern countries), in that case the slaughter became more extensive, not only those who fought from the chariots and horses, but the chariots themselves carrying death and destruction along with them.

To these David had nothing to oppose but his troops, which were all infantry. The ^d law had discouraged the use of horses among the Jews, for reasons suited to

^d Deut. xvii. 16.

the condition of that country and people. Nor do we read of any battle, which had been fought at that time, with any horses in the armies of the Israelites.

BUT, tho' David was not furnished with this kind of military force, yet he had some great advantages in his favour. He had not only the ready and chearful concurrence of all his subjects to his assistance, but he had a more numerous army, trained to a stricter discipline, and better furnished with weapons for war, than any of the former days had seen in his country. He had particularly two bodies of choice troops, which he had formed out * of his own tribe of Judah, called † the *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*: by the first of which names

* In 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. we are told, that Jehoiada, the father of Benaiah, who was the general of the *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*, was of *Kabzeel*; and in Joshua xv. 21. that *Kabzeel* was one of the "cities of the tribe of the children of Judah." We are told likewise in 2 Sam. i. 18. that David "bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow." From which texts, when considered together, it may reasonably (I think) be concluded, that David's *Cherethites* and *Pelethites* were not Philistines, as some have supposed, but were men of his own tribe of Judah.

† The Hebrew words, rendered *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*, may be rendered *Cbretites* (or *Cretites*) and *Peltites*, and this way of rendering them will agree the best with that account which I am going to give of them. The *Cherethites*, or *Cbretites*, or *Cretites*, were originally Philistines, inhabitants of Phenicia; so called either from some town, where the use of bows and arrows first began, or from some Phenician word, now unknown to us, which had relation to the use of bows and arrows. When David, after the death of Saul, saw the necessity of causing the children of Israel to be taught the use of the bow, he seems to have borrowed the name of *Cbretites* or *Cretites* from the Philistines, and

names is meant *archers*, and that of the *Peletbites* means *shield-bearers*; or, (as it is expressed in 1 Chron. v. 18.) "men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with the bow." And they were not only thus better fitted for war than the rest of David's troops, but they were likewise commanded by a general of great courage and known fidelity, * Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.

AND yet, tho' David like a *wise* prince, had not neglected to make all proper provision for such an occasion, he judged aright, like a *pious* prince, that no entire trust was to be placed in these or in any arm of flesh. He knew by long experience, that success and conquest in battle is not always with the strong and the mighty. He himself was a full proof of it; for, when a stripling and only provided with a sling and a few smooth stones, he had slain Goliath the gigantick

and to have given it to his men of Judah who were instructed in that method of fighting, and to have formed them into a corps under that denomination. Just as the name of *Hussars*, originally given to some Hungarians fitted out for war in a manner different from the rest of their countrymen, is now borrowed by other nations (the French, Prussians, &c.) and given to their troops, which are armed in imitation of those Hungarian Hussars.

As for the *Peletbites* or *Peltites*, I believe, that they took their name from some word among the Phenicians, which signified a *buckler* or *shield*: and from them the Greeks, who borrowed the thing, borrowed the name too, calling it *πέλις*, a *buckler*, and men so armed were by them called *πελιδαι*. But of these things a fuller account may perhaps be given on some other occasion.

* 2 Sam. viii. 18.

champion of the Philistines, the very sight of whom had for many days made the armies of Israel to be *greatly afraid*, 1 Sam. xvii. 11, 50. He could not but know, how many accidents in war change the face of hope ; that even winds and storms had been found to determine the fate of combatants, and force victory to leave the quarters, where she seemed to have taken her station. He could not but know, that even the situation of the ground in the field of battle had oftentimes given such advantages to one army, as greater numbers and true courage in the other was not able to ballance. He could not be ignorant, that stratagems in war (when wisely designed and carefully executed) had oftentimes put it into the power of the weakest to disconcert, and put to flight the broken troops of the mightiest. And he must have known, that the greatest numbers, provided with all military aids (tho' in appearance a manifest superiority), had failed in the day of trial : sometimes by depending too much upon success, and rashly presuming too far upon their own experienced strength ; and sometimes by embarrassing themselves, when, in the heat and hurry of action (all order and discipline being gone), that, which at first fed their hopes, only furnished out matter for the greater tumult and confusion.

THESE, which I have mentioned, are some of the natural causes, which have been known to disappoint the hopes of the most powerful armies : and instances

of each of these causes, thus operating in favour of the weakest, David had learned from his own experience and from the history of the former ages of his nation. He chose therefore, with his subjects, rather to "remember the name of the Lord his God:" but this leads our thoughts to the second head of this discourse,

II. IN which I proposed to point out what methods a nation, engaged in war, should take for procuring to its self the blessing of a divine assistance, implied in the phrase of "remembering the name of the Lord our God."

THE vulgate Latin version of these words, and ^b some printed copies of the Greek version, render the original to this purpose, "but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God:" in both these, especially in the last, there is suggested to us,

I. THE first method, which in such circumstances ought to be taken, viz. the solemnly offering up of publick prayers for a divine blessing upon our enterprises.

IN this good work we have been just now employed (I hope devoutly employed); and thus, as you have heard, the Jewish people acted on a like occasion.

^b Ed. Ald. & Complut. have ἐπικαλεσόμεθα.

They

They prayed for their king : they recommended themselves through him to heaven for its gracious assistance. " The Lord hear thee (said they) in the day of trouble ; " the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." I need not mention any more : the whole psalm almost being a prayer addressed to God for this purpose. Would you hear also the sentiments of his son king Solomon on this head ? You have them very fully in that noble prayer, which we find him making at the dedication of his magnificent temple. ⁱ " If thy people (says " he) go out to war against their enemies by the way " that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee " towards this city which thou hast chosen, and the " house which I have built for thy name ; then hear " thou from the heavens their prayer and their suppli- " cation, and maintain their cause." And well might Solomon, or David, or the Jewish nation, look upon this method of publick prayer and humiliation as one good method of engaging heaven in their favour : for in prayer devoutly offer'd up there are three things, which naturally tend to promote this good effect.

WE thereby testify our trust and confidence in God, to whom we pray : Thus when David upon another occasion, had so fully put his trust in his God, that he pronounced him to be his *shield*, his *glory*, and *the lifter up of his head* ; his pious heart could no longer contain its self, but brake out into these self-encouraging words, ^k " I will not be afraid of ten thousands

ⁱ 2 Chron. vi. 34, 35.

^k Psalm iii. 3, 6.

" of people, that have set themselves against me round
" about."

PRAYER has a still farther advantage : it teaches us to make an acknowledgment of our own weakness and insufficiency to secure success to ourselves, without the addition of a divine assistance. And this helps to mortify pride, to lay presumption asleep, and to make us look up with steady eyes, sending devout hearts along with our eyes, to the throne of grace. How useful this is to states or to private persons, reason will teach us, and religion will confirm it.

A THIRD great benefit of prayer, which helps to render God propitious to us, is, that it declares plainly our sense of the great importance of the blessings, for which we are suppliants to heaven.

AND those, which we are this day assembled together to pray for, are some of the greatest, that we are able to ask, or heaven is used to bestow. They are *the pardon of our sins* and *the averting from us the judgments of heaven* ; *the divine blessing and assistance on his majesty's arms*, and *the restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to him and his kingdoms*. Can there be greater blessings than these ? or can there be greater calamities than the want of these ? The enemy, with whom chiefly we have to do, notwithstanding his many losses and disappointments, hath not yet learned aright the rules of justice, nor seen aright
the

the lines of his own interest. Offers for peace have been, if not despised, yet neglected and postponed to the preparations of war. And we may say of our foes, as the psalmist said of his, ¹ "I labour for peace : but when I speak unto them thereof, they make themselves ready to battle." Let us therefore *now* with a more especial attention of mind, *now* that we are humbling ourselves before God by fasting and prayer, consider seriously the great benefit of the blessings, for which we pray. By doing this, we shall continue, when our danger is removed, and we have attained to that prosperity for which we pray (and O! may our prayers never be in vain) ; we shall still, I say, continue to see the importance of them, and shall enjoy them with as much gratitude while they are present, as we now pray with earnestness for them, while they are at a distance.

PRAYER indeed has, as I said, this good tendency in these three several respects, to dispose God to support our diligent endeavours with his gracious assistance.

2. BUT then we must not stop here : if we do, all is vain. We must go on one step farther ; that step, which of all others we are commonly most unwilling to take. We must *repent* and *reform* : this is the most effectual way of "remembering the name of the Lord our God. Every thing short of this is lost, *lost* as found

¹ Psalm cxx. 6. O. Tr.

is in the air, or as chaff scattered by the wind. If our hearts have not been now meditating a change for the better ; if our resolutions of forsaking every evil way have not gone up to heaven along with our prayers, upon what grounds can we hope, that they will there find any favourable acceptance, or even admision ? Let us hear God himself declaring his will by his prophet Jeremiah. ^m “ At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pluck up, and pull down, and “ destroy it ; if that nation, against whom I have “ pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of “ the evil which I thought to do unto them.” Where this, you see, is the condition, “ if they turn from their “ evil :” without this it is not to be expected, that the promise should have any effect ; and God is at full liberty to pour out his vials of wrath upon a corrupt and sinful nation.

THE sins of a nation, I am well aware, may be considered in two very different respects. They are either such as are committed by the people in their publick capacity, or such as are the crimes of the particular members of the society. There is a wide difference between these two sorts of evil, and therefore they ought (on such occasions as this especially) to be distinctly surveyed.

^m Chap. xviii. 7, &c.

LET our behaviour as a nation be examined, and we have (I think) no uncomfortable prospect.

IT hath long been the friendly turn of our state to look with pity on the distresses of other nations, frequently to interpose the weight of our influence on their behalf, and in some instances to support them so far by our arms as to disappoint the fury of their oppressors. And may we not presume, that providence has a blessing in store for such benefactors to mankind?

IT hath long been our virtue (it is our interest indeed, but not less our virtue, since, I trust, we do it upon principle) to decline that strong passion, which powerful kingdoms commonly have, of enlarging and extending their dominions. To that state, with which it is our unhappiness to be contending in arms, this charge more properly belongs, and may not unjustly be laid: and as it hath more than once paid dearly for the vain attempt of universal monarchy, or (what is nearly a-kin to it) universal influence; so heaven, we doubt not, will in mercy to mankind always recompense the same licentious enterprise with the same humbling marks of its displeasure. It is their policy, but then it is their guilt too, to endeavour to avail themselves of every misfortune, which befalls other nations: as if the fury of the sword, and the craft of negotiation was never to have an end, so long as their neighbours have any thing left, which is worth their
while

while to rend from them by the more open, or the more refined sort of oppression : while we, content with our own, and with the security of what is unquestionably our own, can bear to see others happy, without thinking ourselves *therefore* the less happy. And is not this a fit temper of a nation for heaven to bestow its blessings upon ?

WHEN the great Sovereign of the universe looks down upon his works, can he see in this our nation that persecuting spirit, which makes all difference of religious opinions from the established ones so highly criminal, as it does among those, against whom our arms are directed ? With us conscience has its full liberty ; if we err in this, it is on the more favourable side, by giving a wide scope even to the pretences of it. We may therefore hope (without a rash presumption), that on this account we shall meet with the kind regard of heaven in our distresses.

THESE virtues belong to us visibly (I think) as a nation, and in this view we have some ground to speak comfort to ourselves.

BUT what is our condition, when we are considered as individuals and particular members of society ? What sins have we, in this light, to answer for ? or rather, what have we not to answer for ? Many and great they are, it must be acknowledged ; of which a few

few only shall be now mentioned, but such as have the worst and the widest influence upon the community.

THE love of pleasures, either criminal in their nature or made so by excess, is daily getting the mastery over us: we are not only their followers, but their captives. Too many of all ranks, sexes, and ages, seem to have wholly forgotten, that at their baptism they *renounced the pomps and vanity of this wicked world*: what they then professed never to be acquainted with, they have now so *wedded* themselves to, that they seem to have bound themselves to *have and to hold* them for life. And can such men expect, that their prayers should contribute to gain the blessing of heaven upon the nation, who justly deserve to be called (in St. Paul's phrase) "Lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God?"

THE liberty, which we as a people happily enjoy, is unhappily by many turned into licentiousness. In all wise nations, and by all the rules of good policy, the greater the freedom is, which is given, the more severe ought to be the punishment of every breach of it. But alas! what multitudes are there among us, who readily take what the laws kindly give, and then carry on the indulgence to all their own lengths; who having removed the boundaries of duty, extend their field of action to a much larger space of ground, than the venerable name of liberty was ever meant to convey

2 Tim. iii. 4.

to them. This is to make one of the best of things serve for some of the worst of purposes; it is to make what is honourable become a cover for what is infamous, and (as St. Peter better expresses it) to "use liberty for a cloak of maliciousness."

Laws are sacred things; and, when once they are known, every good man will pay a ready obedience to them, and every good magistrate will take care that they be punctually obeyed. But is it so with us? are they not oftentimes no sooner almost made, than they are neglected? Do men seem to think, that their consciences are bound to the observance of them? they are, no doubt, whether their reason or their interests approve of the laws or not: for the language of government, as well as that of St. Paul, commands, that men should be "subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake," not only for fear of the penalties, but likewise out of a sense of the duty of obedience. It is our misfortune too, that sufficient care is not taken by the magistrate, that the laws should be observed. What the causes of this may be, I forbear to mention. I speak now of the effects only; and must lament, as I believe all wise men to do, that though it is looked upon as honourable to have a share in the making the laws, yet it is not looked upon as infamous to have a share in the breaking them, or in suffering them to be broken.

• 1 Ep. ii. 16.

• Rom. xiii. 5.

THE last evil which I shall mention on this occasion is the practice, which hath long prevailed, and is now growing almost general among us, I mean, that of profaning the Lord's day. The very first command, which God ever gave to mankind, was, that, when six days are ended, a seventh should be observed ^a as a day of *rest*, and a day which he had *blessed and sanctified*; thereby appointing one seventh portion of our time to be set apart for the purposes of religion, particularly in memory of him as the creator of all things: this seventh part of our time is now fixed to the first day of every week by the christian religion, for the additional memory of our redemption as on that day by the blessed Jesus. And ^r one of the statutes of our country made *for the better observation of the Lord's day* commands in these words, that *all persons shall on that day apply themselves to the observation of the same by exercising themselves thereon in the duties of piety and true religion, publickly and privately*. It lays penalties upon some for the violating of the *Lord's day or any part thereof*, but by no means excuses the same practice in others, whom the penalties do not reach. These are not left to their liberty, but to their good manners; it not being supposed by the law, that any would do that for their *pleasure*, which others are not allowed to do for their *profit*. Thus speaks the law of God, and thus (as I have shewed you) the law of man: but what says the behaviour of too many? let them ask their own hearts, whether they do as they are required to do both by God and

^a Gen. ii. 2, 3.

^r 29 Car. II.

man; whether visitings and journeyings more frequently made on this sacred day than on the others, whether professed diversions of any sort, upon any portion of this day, and whether a neglect, either total or partial, of divine worship in publick, can be reconciled with what is due to a day of *rest*, and a day *sanctified* for the purposes of religion.

THESE are some of the great and reigning evils, which we are to reform, which we *must* reform, if we hope that our supplications should go up as an offering of a sweet-smelling favour to heaven.

WE have professed indeed in former years to humble ourselves before God: we fasted and prayed then, as we have now done, before we enter'd upon the exerting of our main power and strength against the injurious disturbers of our peace and prosperity. But let every one of us examine himself, whether he is in any respect better in his life and conversation; what vices he hath parted with, and what virtues he has acquired since he last appeared at church on such an occasion as this. To what purpose did we then fast and pray, or to what purpose do we now, if all this is to be the work of a day only, and to have no good effect, no reforming influence upon our morals?

LET all of us therefore, I beseech you, begin from this day the necessary work of repentance; necessary for the safety of our souls, and necessary too for the welfare

welfare and prosperity of our country. All of us, I say, in our several stations, but suitably to our several stations: such as have power and authority, by taking care, that the laws against vice and immorality be put in a vigorous execution: such as have weight and influence from their rank in life, by setting patterns of every publick and private virtue, to be followed by those, who are naturally disposed to take from them the mode and fashion of their actions: such as are appointed to teach and instruct men in the duties of their holy religion, by labouring diligently in earnest and well-pointed exhortations, that the loose and the profligate may not only be made sensible of their sins, but may be persuaded to forsake and renounce them. All of us, whatsoever our condition of life be, by beginning to do what is most certainly in our power, to reform ourselves; that, when the divine Providence shall look down upon our land, it may look down upon us without displeasure, and that our virtues may so plead for us, that we may find the good effects of all which we this day aim at by our fasting, our prayers, and our humiliation.

WHICH may God of his infinite mercy grant for his Son Jesus Christ's sake, &c.

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